

## **3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **3.1 COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS**

The demographic area encompasses the towns of Ruth, Rutherfordton and Spindale. The project study area includes portions of all three towns.

#### **3.1.1 Population Characteristics**

Rutherford County's population grew at a relatively slow pace (10.5%) between 1990 and 2000. The demographic area grew somewhat more rapidly than the County (12.9%). The Town of Rutherfordton experienced 14.2% growth, while the Town of Spindale lost population (-0.4%), as did the Town of Ruth (-10%). According to the 2000 census, Rutherford County had a population of 62,899 in the year 2000. The Town of Rutherfordton had a population of 4,131 in 2000. The Town of Spindale had a population of 4,022 and the Town of Ruth had a population of 329 in 2000.

In comparison to North Carolina, Rutherford County and the demographic area have much higher percentages of Whites and lower percentages of other racial groups. The demographic area is 82.9% White, 14.9% African American, 1.1% Hispanic and less than 1% other races (American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, etc.). Rutherfordton, Ruth and Rutherford County have similar racial distributions. The Town of Spindale, on the other hand, is much more similar to the State's racial distribution, with a higher minority population.

Demographic assessment does not indicate the presence of a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) language group which exceeds the United States Department of Justice's "Safe Harbor" thresholds.

#### **3.1.2 Economic Characteristics**

In 2000, the median household income for the demographic area was \$32,931. This is lower than the median household incomes for Rutherfordton (\$37,941), but higher than the median household incomes for Spindale (\$23,365), Ruth (\$32,083) and Rutherford County (\$31,122).

#### **3.1.3 Employment**

The services industry added the most jobs in Rutherford County between 1990 and 2000, with a total of nearly 1,800 more jobs in 2000 than in 1990. Much of this growth was driven by the health services industry. A total of nearly 2,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector during the same timeframe, mainly due to the textile industry, which declined from 5,894 jobs in 1990 to 3,468 jobs in 2000.